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The Blessed Marriage of Ayesha (RA) and Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) in Islam

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful!

The age of marriage in Islam:

Marriage in Islam is designed to be a simple process. In fact, there was initially no minimum age for marriage in Islam; however, a bride or groom must be pubescent in order to consummate a marriage. This fact is evident from the hadith of Ayesha (Aisha) wherein she reported that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) married her when she was six years old and he consummated his marriage with her when she was nine years old (after she received her menses). Ayesha also reported that she remained

with the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) for nine years till his death in the year 632. The actual hadith in the collection of Bukhari that was narrated by Ayesha reads as follows: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) entered into marriage with me when I was a girl of six ... and at the time [of joining his household to consummate the marriage] I was a girl of nine years of age**."

Now before I proceed with the prerequisites of marriage in Islam, it is imperative that I shed some light on the marriage of Ayesha and the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) which is an extremely controversial subject among both non-Muslims and Muslims alike. To begin, one must first determine if the marriage of Ayesha and the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) is actually lawful in the eyes of God and compliant with modern science and biology. Prior to both Ayesha and Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) being born, the Bible in Numbers 31:17 - 18) reads: "**Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. <u>But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves</u>**." Thus, Moses (P.B.U.H.) permitted his soldiers to keep all the women children (young girl virgins) for themselves as wives. So, it is evident that among the previous generations it was not a social taboo to marry at a young age, even if there was a significant age disparity between the bride and groom. In fact, there is not

a single report from the enemies of Islam wherein they objected to the marriage between Ayesha and the Prophet (P.B.U.H.).

The second point worth mentioning is the fact that Ayesha and the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) did not consummate their marriage until after she received her menses. Thus, she was both socially and biologically a woman according to culture in which she lived. So, even if one is not religiously inclined, they cannot even use a scientific/biological discourse to dispute the marriage between Ayesha and the Prophet (P.B.U.H.). In fact, to do so would be deemed cultural imperialism and an ex-post-facto offense. One simply cannot judge Ayesha and the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) marriage, which occurred during the 7th century according to 21st century social norms. I make it a point to stress the words "social norms;" because, the marriage between Ayesha and the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) did not violate any established religious commandments.

According to the scientific discipline of Biology, menses (menstrual cycle) is defined as the monthly flow of blood and cellular debris from a non-pregnant uterus that begins at puberty and ceases at menopause. It is commonly divided into three phases; namely, the follicular phase, ovulation, and the luteal phase. During ovulation, a woman generally has the ability to produce an egg (ovum); at which point, she will

become pregnant if the egg becomes fertilized. So, in reality, even before receiving menses, a girl can begin to ovulate.

A March 30, 2012 article in the New York Times titled, "*Puberty Before Age 10: A New 'Normal'?*" stated: "In the late 1980s, Marcia Herman-Giddens, then a physician's associate in the pediatric department of the Duke University Medical Center, started noticing that an awful lot of 8 and 9 year-olds in her clinic had sprouted pubic hair and breasts. The medical wisdom, at that time, based on a landmark 1960 study of institutionalized British children, was that puberty began, on average, for girls at age 11. But that was not what Herman Giddens was seeing. So she started collecting data, eventually leading a study with the American Academy of Pediatrics that sampled 17,000 girls, finding that among White girls, the average age of breast budding was 9.96. Among Black girls, it was 8.87." Furthermore, according to WebMD, "Your first menstrual period is called menarche (MEN-ar-kee). It usually starts sometime between ages 11 and 14, but it can happen as early as age 9 or as late as 15. If you are a teenage girl, see your doctor if you have not started having periods by age 15. Menarche is a sign you are growing up and becoming a woman. Along with starting your period, your body is changing. You've begun to develop breasts, pubic hair, and underarm hair. And

your hips have begun to widen. Menarche also means that if you have sex, you can get pregnant. You can even get pregnant in the month before your first period starts." Thus, based on the above mentioned information, it should be clear that Ayesha was even a woman according to the guidelines detailed in modern Biology.

Unfortunately, there are a number of apologetic Muslims who make it their business to deny that the marriage between Ayesha and the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) occurred when she was age 6. They are entitled to their opinion. However, I would just like to reiterate the point that it is cultural imperialism and an ex-post-facto offense to condemn the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) by judging him according to 21st century laws and social norms. Would I marry my 9 year-old daughter to a 50 year-old man? Probably not! Why? It simply goes against my accepted cultural norms. Ironically, it is absolutely lawful for a Jew, Christian, or Muslim to marry their first cousin. However, if you were to ask the average American Christian to marry their first cousin, they would grimace at the very thought of doing so. Why? Not because it is forbidden from a religious perspective, but because the social norms of the country have been given precedence over their religious commandments. Why then should we Muslims allow a group of people (Jews, Christians, atheists, etc.) who do not always adhere to any laws other than those which suit their

desires to serve as judge, jury, and prosecutor over Islamic practices?

Lastly, if at any time after her marriage to the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) wherein Ayesha felt as if she was forced to wed him against her will, she could have said so and the marriage would have been annulled; because, a woman cannot be inherited against her will. The evidence for this ruling is found in Surah Al-Nisa (4:19) of the Quran which reads: "**O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should ye treat them with harshness, that ye may Take away part of the dower ye have given them, except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary, live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them, it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good.**" Furthermore, in Surah Al Azab (33:12 -13) the wives of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) were given the opportunity to either leave him or stay with him, and they all chose to remain with him. The verses' supporting this fact reads as follows: "**O Prophet! Say to thy Consorts: 'If it be that ye desire the life of this World, and its glitter, then come! I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner. But if ye seek Allah and His Apostle, and the Home of**

the Hereafter, verily Allah has prepared for the well-doers amongst you a great reward.'"

Age of marriage for orphans:

It is important to note that Islam goes to great lengths to protect the interest of orphans. As such, even though the age of marriage for them is the same as other children; namely at the onset of puberty versus a specific age, the issues surrounding orphans can be slightly different. For example, if one were to read Surah Al-Nisa (4:6) of the Quran which says: "**Make trial of orphans until they reach the age of marriage; if then ye find sound judgment in them, release their property to them; but consume it not wastefully, nor in haste against their growing up. If the guardian is well-off, Let him claim no remuneration, but if he is poor, let him have for himself what is just and reasonable. When ye release their property to them, take witnesses in their presence: But all-sufficient is Allah in taking account.**" What is more, according to Tafsir Ibn Kathir, under the heading: Protecting the Property of the Orphans, it is stated: "Allah commands that the property of the orphans be surrendered to them in full when they reach the age of adolescence..." Also, under the heading: Giving Back the Property of the Orphans When They Reach Adulthood, it states: "(if then you find sound judgment in them, release their

property to them,); Sa`id bin Jubayr said that this portion of the Ayah means, when you find them to be good in the religion and wise with their money. Similar was reported from Ibn `Abbas, Al-Hasan Al-Basri and others among the Imams. The scholars of Fiqh stated that when an orphan child becomes good in the religion and wise concerning money, then the inheritance that his caretaker was keeping for him should be surrendered to him."

Now, if one notices, the verse clearly says to make trial of orphans. The emphasis here is to not allow the orphan to be taken advantage of by the suitor with a sinister agenda; namely, to either marry them and perhaps have them murdered (unknowingly to the public) in order to obtain a portion of their estate via the laws of inheritance or to manipulate them into giving away their entire estate as an act of love or generosity. Therefore, before their property is to be released to them by their guardian, it must be established that the orphan in question is competent and aware of their position in life; namely, once considered an adult under Islamic law at the onset of puberty, their guardian cannot forcefully govern their affairs. So in essence, if none of the signs of puberty are detectable, upon reaching fifteen years of age, the orphan will automatically be considered pubescent and deemed at the age of intellectual maturity. At this age for example, if an orphan girl is wooed

off her feet by a suitor to the point that she is even willing to forfeit her right to a wedding dowry, even if her guardian objects, she can go to the courts to have the marriage performed. After this point, if the marriage fails, she could be left penniless and heartbroken and her former guardian will have no authority with regard to remedying her dilemma. This is also one of the reasons why a guardian is to release the property of the orphan child in the presence of two witnesses. Thus, a neutral party in the form of the two witnesses will be able to protect the honor of the former guardian who might become victimized by slander if an orphaned girl who is later swindled out of her inheritance by her new husband and then resorts to arguing that she was not advised prior to marrying, although her decision was against her guardian's wishes or that she did not receive her entire inheritance.

The signs of puberty in Islam which enables one to consummate a marriage:

According to Islamic law, a woman is deemed to have reached puberty, making it lawful to consummate a marriage when one of the following four things occurs:

1. **When she reaches the age of fifteen.**

2. **When her pubic hair grows (which is hair around the private parts and armpits).**
3. **When she emits maniy (fluid released at climax).**
4. **When she begins her menses.**

A male on the other hand is considered to be pubescent whenever one of the following three signs appears:

1. **Nocturnal emissions (wet dreams)**
2. **Growth of hairs around the private parts and armpits; facial hair is not deemed an indicator.**
3. **Reaching the age of fifteen**

The evidence supporting these pubescent rulings include the following hadith of Bukhari wherein Ibn Umar narrated: **"Allah's Apostle called me to present myself in front of him on the eve of the battle of Uhud, I was fourteen years of age at that time and he did not allow me to take part in that battle, but he called me in front of him on the eve of the battle of the Trench when I was fifteen years old, and he allowed me (to join the battle)." Nafi' said, "I went to 'Umar bin 'Abdul Aziz who was Caliph at that time and related the above narration to him, He said, "This age (fifteen) is the limit between childhood and**

manhood," and wrote to his governors to give salaries to those who reached the age of fifteen." Furthermore, a hadith collected by Abu Dawud reports that Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) allegedly said: **"Allah does not accept the prayer of a menstruating woman (who has reached puberty) unless she wears a veil."** Regarding the issue of sexual discharge constituting a condition of puberty is the hadith of Tirmidhi wherein Ali related that the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said: **"Upon the emission of pre-ejaculatory fluid (madhi), a ritual ablution (wudu) is obliged, and upon the emission of sperm (mani), a ritual bath (ghusl) is obliged."** Lastly, according to a Hadith collected by Imam Muslim wherein Atiyyah al-Qurazi reportedly said: **"I was among the captives of Banu Qurayzah. They (the Companions) examined us, and those who had begun to grow hair (pubes; i.e., adults) were killed, and those who had not (children) were not killed. I was among those who had not grown hair."**

In view of the above mentioned information, it is important to note that according to Mehmet Dikmen, "Reaching the age of puberty through menstruation or ejaculation is called natural puberty. When a person reaches puberty naturally, he/she becomes mukallaf, that is, his/her religious obligations start. It is possible that a boy or a girl reaches the age of puberty but the

boy does not ejaculate and the girl does not menstruate. (Such a boy is called a 'murahiq' and such a girl is called a 'murahiqa'). In this case, the age of fifteen is regarded as the starting time of accountability regarding one's religious obligations. That is, when a girl or boy becomes fifteen years old, they are regarded as having reached the age of puberty even if they have not reached puberty naturally; and as such, the boy or girl in question will be regarded as mukallaf (accountable).

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